

'Survivors' serve customers on Woolco's last day

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"We survived the Woolco closing," read the T-shirts worn by Woolco employees on their final day — Saturday. The back of the shirts read "We tried to be your friendly store."

After more than four years of doing business in New Iberia, the Iberia Plaza Woolco Department Store, along with 335 other Woolco stores throughout the south and central states, is closing the doors.

The mood in the store seemed joyous as Woolco's last customers rummaged through the remains of the stock.

BUT THERE WAS also a feeling of sadness. What remained of the merchandise after a solid month of sales was confined to an area behind the cash registers and took up only about one-fourth of the store's floor space.

Behind the ropes that confined the customers were other employees removing shelves, racks and other items that once occupied the large store.

The employees appeared happy even knowing that they wouldn't have a job at the close of business on Saturday. All around were empty counters and open spaces — all past history of "your friendly store."

However, it's the end of one era and the beginning of another.

THAT SECOND era will be Wal-Mart Stores. Wal-Mart Stores Inc. signed leases on the building and will begin remodeling soon.

Along with the New Iberia Woolco store, Wal-Mart will also take over two stores in Lafayette and one in Opelousas.

Jack Shewmaker, Wal-Mart president, said the store here will employ about 100 area residents and that prior to its opening, current employees of Woolco will be interviewed for jobs with his company.